The Campbell's Reformation Movement

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> That the Church of Christ upon earth is **essentially**, **intentionally**, and **constitutionally one**; consisting of **all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ** and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.[1]

In the Nineteenth century, Thomas (1763-1854) and Alexander (1788-1866) Campbell (father and son) attempted to reunite Christians within the various denominations. Thomas Campbell left Ireland in 1807 for America. Upon his arrival, he sought to be licensed to preach within the Presbyterian Church of his own background. In Ireland as well as America, the Presbyterians were divided into various segments that refused fellowship with each other. For example, you had the **Old Lights**, **Anti-Burgher, Seceder Presbyterian Church** all wrapped up into one unique body of believers. Following his ordination to preach within this exclusive and fragmented body of Presbyterians, he boldly crossed the boundary lines of this body of believers to include those outside of their own ecclesiastical fellowship of sectarianism to participate in communion.

Within the Presbyterian Church, there was a group of Presbyterians known as **Old Lights** and another group known as the **New Lights**. The Old Lights did not approve of revivals whereas the New Lights approved. By offering the Lord's Supper to the New Lights, the Old Lights considered this action treacherous, which action was considered traitorous, even disloyal, and double-crossing. As a result of this clandestine (klan-ˈdes-tən, held in, or conducted with secrecy) action against the so-called loyal party, he was censured and dismissed from this

[1] Thomas Campbell, Declaration and Address and Barton W. Stone and Others, Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery, 1809, 1804 (St. Louis, Missouri: Mission Messenger, 1975), 44.

intolerant body of believers. As a result of this action, in 1809, Thomas Campbell penned what has become known as the *Declaration and Address*, which document called for unity among **all** Christians. This document was made up of four parts: (**1**) a **Declaration** that set forth the purpose of the new association, (**2**) an **Address** that called attention to the evils of a divided church and a means of restoring unity among believers, (**3**) an **Appendix** that dealt with criticisms that might object to his Address, and (**4**) a **Postscript** that called for immediate action.[2]

Leroy Garrett (1918-2015) was the first author within the American Restoration Movement to refer to the efforts of Barton W. Stone and Thomas and Alexander Campbell as The Stone-Campbell Movement, which Movement began as a ***Reformation Movement*** **rather than** a ***Restoration Movement***.[3] The Movement initiated by Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell (father) and Alexander Campbell (son) sought to bring about reform within the existing denominations of God's people. On the other hand, this ***Reformation Movement*** toward the end of the Nineteenth century degenerated or digressed into a ***Restoration Movement*** **in 1889** under the leadership of Daniel Sommer (1850-1940), which action divided the efforts of Stone and the Campbells into numerous warring factions.[4] For example, today (2021), this ***Reformation Movement*** is now divided into about twenty-five aggressive factions within the Churches of Christ as well as divisions within the Disciples of Christ and the Christian Church.[5]

The Movement of the Campbells and Stone resulted in three major denominations coming into existence: (**1**) the Disciples of Christ, (**2**) the Christian Church, and (**3**) the Church of Christ. **All three Movements became denominational in their makeup**. We should not forget that all of the protestant denominations, during and before the Campbells, referred to themselves as the "churches of Christ." The expression Church of Christ simply denoted that they were **all** a part of the one body of Christ. Today, especially within the so-called Churches of Christ, many Christians deny that they are a denomination in spite of their early beginning. However, according to Alexander Campbell, his Movement became a domination. In spite of

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[2] C. A. Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Co., Inc., 1985.

[3] Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 1981, Revised edition, 1994).

[4] Under Daniel Sommer's leadership, the Church of Christ had its beginning in 1889.

[5] Morrison Meade Davis (1850-1925) wrote *The Restoration Movement of the Nineteenth Century* (Cincinnati. OH: The standard Publishing Company, 1913). About seven years earlier (1906), David Lipscomb (1831-1917) finalized the Church of Christ as a distinct religious body. Leroy penned the following commentary on this transaction:

> We, the Churches of Christ, are the only one of the three branches that uses that name exclusively. We seem to understand that we did not exist as a separate group back in the days of Campbell and Stone**. Like the Independent Christian Church, we became a separate group by way of division, the first major split in the movement, which began to take form in the 1880's and was clearly manifest by 1906 when the U. S. Census listed us as a separate denomination**. See Leroy Garrett, *What Must the Church of Christ Do to Be saved?* (2011), 81-82. (Emphasis mine—bold)

this drawback, he still maintained that his Movement was a ***Reformation Movement***, **not** a ***Restoration Movement***. Alexander explained:

> Whenever the history of this effort at **reformation** shall have been faithfully written, it will appear, we think, bright as the sun, that our career has been marked with a spirit of forbearance, moderation, and **love of union with an unequivocal desire for preserving the integrity, harmony, and co-operation of all who teach one faith, one Lord, and one immersion**. In confirmation of this fact I am happy to add that no Baptist of good character for piety and morality, has ever been, because of a diverse theory or opinion, excluded from our communion or communities. . . . We, as a **denomination,** are as **desirous as ever to unite and co-operate with all Christians** on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant (emphasis mine).[6] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

As we approach the distinction between these two concepts of Christianity, we need to keep in mind that a *Restoration Movement* seeks to restore the church. The modern-day Restoration Movement had its birth in 1889 under the leadership of Daniel Sommers (1850-1940). On the other hand, **a *Reformation Movement* seeks to bring about a change** in the established (existing) body of Christ. The ***Reformation Movement*** initiated by Stone and the Campbells is expressed in the following motto: "We are **not** the only Christians, but Christians only." On the other hand, the **Restoration Movement** would say that "We are the **only** Christians." Within the distinctive fellowship of Christians known as Churches of Christ, we have approximately twenty-five separate factions that limit God's people to their own particular brand of orthodoxy.

REFORMATION HERMENEUTICS: UNITY IN DIVERSITY VERSUS RESTORATION HERMENEUTICS: UNITY IN CONFORMITY

One of the major problems existing within the present day so-called **Restoration Movement**, initiated in the 1890s, is ***Restoration hermeneutics*** (science of interpretation). To properly understand the dilemma that the Churches of Christ face in the twenty-first century is found in one's hermeneutics. In other words, there is ***Reformation hermeneutics*** and ***Restoration hermeneutics***. The ***Reformation hermeneutics*** advance the belief that "We are

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[6]See Alexander Campbell, "The Editor's Response to Mr. Broaddus," [John Broaddus, 1827-1895] *Millennial Harbinger,* New Series, 4, no. 12 (December 1840): 556. See also Robert Richardson's article "History of the Disciples of Christ" in which he spoke about Campbell's movement as a denomination in **Israel Daniel Rupp's**, *History of All the Religious Denominations in the United States: Containing Authentic Accounts of the Rise and Progress, Faith and Practice, Localities and Statistics, of the Different Persuasions* (Harrisburg, PA: John Winebrenner, 1849), 230. In his essay, he penned the following comments:

> It may be safely affirmed, that **no denomination in our country is so familiar with the contents of the Bible**, although there is yet, doubtless great deficiency in this respect with many. But, it is believed, that in this there is a progressive improvement, and a more special attention paid to the instruction of the young in the sacred volume, in families and Sunday schools.

Christians only, but **not** the only Christians." Also, ***Reformation hermeneutics*** is concerned with "audience relevance" as well as "context." Alternatively, the ***Restoration hermeneutics*** assert that "We are the **only** Christians." Furthermore, the ***Restoration hermeneutics*** assert that there is an identifiable order of worship (known as "pattern theology"[7]) to be carried out on a Sunday morning with five distinctive functions in order for one's worship to be acceptable to God. This kind of hermeneutics is proof-text interpretation. Contrariwise, the ***Reformation hermeneutics*** point out that there is not one word about a so-called worship service with five ritualistic acts (pattern or arrangements) that must be performed.

Reformation hermeneutics advocate "**unity in diversity**." Conversely, ***Restoration hermeneutics*** support "**unity in conformity**." Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), in 1835, sought to curb the current trend in his day of disassociating from one whose knowledge did not measure up to the *status quo* (the existing state of affairs—seeks to preserve the *status quo*) of a particular fellowship of God's people. The following comments by Campbell are on target as he seeks to capture the unsound position of throwing one out of the church for differences over interpretation, which mentality is ***Restoration hermeneutics***. The following comments by Campbell refutes a "restoration mentality":

> **Amongst Christians there is now, as there was at the beginning a very great diversity in the knowledge of the Christian institution**. There are babes, children, young men, and fathers in Christ now, as well as in the days of the Apostle John. This, from the **natural gifts of God**, from the **diversities of age**, **education, and circumstances**, is unavoidable. And would it not be just as rational and as scriptural to excommunicate one another, because our knowledge is less or greater than any fixed measure, as for differences of opinion or matters of speculation [**Reformation hermeneutics**]?
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> Indeed, in most cases where proscription [an imposed restraint or restriction **:** PROHIBITION] and exclusions now occur in this country, the excluded are the most intelligent members of the society; and **although no community will accuse a man because he knows more of his Bible than his brethren, and on this account exclude him from their communion**; yet this, it is manifest, rather than heresy, (of which, however, for consistency's sake, he must be accused,) is, in truth, the real cause of separation [**Restoration hermeneutics**].
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> If God has bestowed better gifts or better opportunities on one man than another, by which he has attained more knowledge, instead of thanking God for his kindness to the community, they beg God to take him away; and if he will not be so unkind, they will at length put him from among them under the charge of heresy. **In most instances the greatest error of which a brother [or sister--RDB] can be guilty, is to study his Bible more than his companions—or, at least, to surpass them in his knowledge of the mystery of Christ**.[8] (Emphasis mine—bold—**Restoration hermeneutics**)

In the fifties (1951-1957) and early sixties, Carl Ketcherside[9] (1908-1989, minister, author, and advocate of unity among Christians) realized that the religious group known as the Churches of Christ were hopelessly deadlocked into more and more proliferation or explosion

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[7] For an in-depth study on "Pattern Theology", see Dallas Burdette: freedominchrist.net—after accessing this site, go to Articles on the One Cup Issue and then click on "Oddities in Pattern Theology.

[8] Alexander Campbell, "To Mr. William Jones, of London, Letter IV," *Millennial Harbinger* 6, no. 3 (March 1835): 112.

[9] Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989), minister, author, and advocate of unity among Christians.

of distinctive religious bodies, each one claiming absolute knowledge of the Word of God (***Restoration hermeneutics***). If one failed to adhere to the dogma of a particular group, this individual was ostracized as unfaithful to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Ketcherside sought to undermine the prevailing attitude exhibited by each unique fellowship concerning fellowship with God and with one another, which recognition depended upon absolute freedom from error in one's understanding of Scripture. The following comments by him illustrate the utter futility of basing fellowship upon one's grasp of abstract truth, which is none other than ***Restoration hermeneutics***:

> Those who were in Christ in the days of the apostles were in error on many points. They were mistaken about a lot of things but they were **not** charged with "preaching another gospel." **Freedom from error is not a condition of salvation else all men [and women--RDB] would be damned**. We are **not** saved by attainment to a certain degree of knowledge but by faith in Christ Jesus. **It is by belief of facts related to him, and not by grasp of abstract truth, that we are justified before God**. Certainly it is not by performance of meritorious deeds nor by legalistic conformity. **When we postulate a program of justification by knowledge we hang ourselves on the gallows we have constructed to rid ourselves of others, unless we are prepared to make ourselves even more ridiculous by affirming that we know as much as God**.[10] (Emphasis mine—bold)

This citation, should reinforce ones perception or capture the very heart of the distinction between ***Reformation hermeneutics*** versus ***Restoration hermeneutics***. When Carl penned the above citation, his comments should nail the coffin shut to the so-called ***Restoration hermeneutics,*** **which hermeneutics, in the twenty-first century, still prevails within the Churches of Christ as a whole.** What is the background of the modern-day Church of Christ? Did this distinctive fellowship exist in the first century? Unfortunately, the **American Restoration Movement** has assumed that the true Church of Christ ceased to exist.

On the other hand, ***Reformation hermeneutics*** wanted and still wants to bring about change in the existing body of Christ, which includes all denominations. As a result of this faulty mindset, the ***Restoration Movement*** sought to "**restore**" the Church to its original intent since it ceased to exist. Having said this, the denominational Church of Christ did not exist as a collective body of people until the Nineteenth century. Leroy Garrett (1918-2015) wrote an excellent essay in which he pointed to the date of August 17, 1889 as the birthday for the denominational Church of Christ as a unique body of believers. He began his essay with questions about the whereabouts of the Church of Christ in the sixteenth century:

> Where was the "Church of Christ" when Luther nailed his thesis to the door of that cathedral in 1517? And where was it when the preaching of Peter the Hermit fired the First Crusade in 1095, or when Emperor Marion called 500 bishops to the Council of Chalcedon in 451?
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> **We are told that "we" were then lost in the wilderness, and that Alex Campbell and Barton Stone "restored" the true church around 1809**. But this is only another way of saying that the "Church of Christ" did not exist before the 19th century. To assert that our birthday is really on Pentecost in 33 A.D. is to beg the question that we are indeed the true church and no one else is. That

[10]Carl Ketcherside, "Another Gospel," *Mission Messenger* 27, no 1 (January 1965): 6-7.

the Body of Christ, the congregation of the New Covenant scriptures, began on Pentecost in 30 or 33 A. D. is generally accepted as a fact of history. **But for any one religious society today to claim to be precisely that church is a risky pretension, to say the least**. If all the other communions, whether Presbyterian, Mormon or Roman Catholic began since that glorious Pentecost, it is likely that the "Church of Christ" – and the "Church of God" – also began sometime since then.[11] (Emphasis mine—bold)

It is also significant that Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) recognized that the Church of Christ exists in various denominational bodies and that each fellowship should work together. His efforts toward unity came to be known, in the words of Leroy Garrett, as the Stone/Campbell Movement, which Movement was an undertaking to unite Christians in the various sects. Thomas (father of Alexander Campbell) expresses this thought of "unity in diversity" in **proposition two** in his *Declaration and Address* while he was still Presbyterian, which statement is "***Reformation hermeneutics***":

That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus has also received them, to the glory of God. **And for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment**.[12] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

Unlike the ***Restoration Movement hermeneutics***, the ***Reformation Movement hermeneutics*** applied and still applies Romans 14-16 and 1 Corinthians 8 to maintain "**unity in diversity**." To assist the reader in grasping this concept, here are some short citations from Romans 14, 15 and 1 Corinthians 8:

Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. [2] One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. [3] The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. [4] **Who are you to judge someone else's servant?** To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand. (Romans 14:1-4)

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:7

[11] Leroy Garrett, "Is August 17, 1889 the Birthday of the Church of Christ?" *Restoration Review* 17, no 1 (January 1975), 6-7.

[12] See C. A Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, Edited by Don DeWelt (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Co., Inc., 1985), 108

> Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. [2] Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. [3] But whoever loves God is known by God. (1 Corinthians 8:1-5)[13]

I began my preaching ministry when I was seventeen years old. When I was thirty-four years old (1968), I was disfellowshiped for my acceptance of a brother who was a member of a different type of the Churches of Christ (individual cups in the communion and Bible study on Sunday morning before the so-called worship service). When I was seventeen years old, I started a house church, which later came to be called the Vonora Ave. Church of Christ. On our sign, we had the slogan—"Established in AD 33." This odd fellowship adopted a ***Restoration hermeneutics***, that is to say, we had restored the "**true**" Church of Christ.[14] For one to disagree with us, in essence, was to disagree with God Himself.

My unique fellowship believed that we were the only Christians, not Christians only. We rejected the slogan: "We are Christians only, but not the only Christians." We taught that those who were not a part of our religious movement would die and be cast into a "torture chamber" (called "hell") for using individual cups in the communion. Everyone was on their way to "hell" except us. We were the "**true**" Church of Christ. When I adopted a ***Reformation hermeneutics*** **I was cast out of that fellowship**. I am still seeking to bring about reform within the Churches of Christ—"We are Christians only, **not** the only Christians." Finally, our motto ought to be: "Let the **unity** of Christians be our polar star."[15] The following citation from Thomas Campbell should also resonate with all of God's family—**Proposition 6** from *Declaration and Address*:

> **That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so**; for their faith **must not stand in the wisdom of men**, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession.[16] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

Robert Richardson (1806-1876) wrote a short book on *The Principles and Objects of the Religious Reformation*. In this treatise of the Stone/Campbell Movement, we discover examples of a ***Reformation Movement mentality*** versus a ***Restoration Movement mentality***. Even though he did not use the identical or similar phraseology, his examination of Campbell and others are

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[13] For in-depth studies on Unity in Diversity," see Dallas Burdette: freedominchrist.net—once you have accessed this site—click on Recent Post and then click on "Articles on Unity in Diversity."

[14] Leroy Garrett cited Karl Barth's (1886-1968) definition of the true church as "The true church is where the power of Christ is present in the lives of the people." See Leroy Garrett, *What Must the Church of Christ Do to be Saved*, 135.

[15] I highly recommend the following books: (1) Leroy Garrett, *What Must the Church of Christ Do to be Saved?* (available through Amazon), and (2) Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 1994), which book is also available through Amazon.

[16] Thomas Campbell, "Declaration and Address," in C. A. Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1985), 110.

still clear as to the focus of each Movement. He writes: "It is there declared that there is 'ONE FAITH, but is nowhere said that there is one opinion."[17] ***Reformation hermeneutics*** involves "one faith," that is to say, Jesus as God's way of salvation (God's Gospel). On the other hand, the "one opinion" is ***Restoration hermeneutics***, which means that one must agree with his or her unique fellowship in their interpretation of the Scriptures. Again, **Richardson captures** this distinction between the two modes of interpretation in the following words:

> It is this: that while they suppose this Christian faith to be *doctrinal* [**Restoration Hermeneutics—RDB**], we regard it as *personal* [**Reformation Hermeneutics—RDB**]. In other words, they suppose doctrines, or religious tenets, to be the subject-matter of this faith; we on the contrary, conceive it to on a *person*—**THE Lord Jesus Christ HIMSELF**. While they, accordingly, require an elaborate confession from each convert—a confession mainly of a doctrinal and intellectual character, studiously elaborated into an extended formula—we demand only a simple *confession of Christ*—a heartfelt acknowledgment that *Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God*."[18] (Emphasis mine—bold)

Over again, he seeks to unfold the distinction with the following explanation: "The Christian faith, then, in our view, consists **not** in any theory or system of doctrine, but in a sincere belief in the person and mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is personal in its subject, as well as in its object."[19] Yet again, he sought to go right to the heart of ***Reformation hermeneutics***, and, at the same time, to discredit ***Restoration hermeneutics***:

> **It has been, indeed, the great error of Protestants, and the great cause of all their schisms, that they have sought to supersede this direct personal reliance upon Christ, by a mere intellectual assent to a set or system of tenets**. True, they do by no means proscribe ["to condemn or forbid as harmful or unlawful**:** PROHIBIT"] this personal trust or faith in Christ, but the natural working of the whole machinery of a party, so far as it is peculiar and denominational, tends to lead the mind away from this simple faith to a false confidence in mere human opinions and intellectual abstractions, and in outward forms [**Restoration hermeneutics—unity in conformity--RDB**].
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> Thanks, however, to the power of the gospel itself, this tendency of the systems of the day has been checked in individual cases; and, though many are lulled into a false security, trusting to the orthodoxy of their belief, and mistaking a zeal for human opinions as a meritorious earnestness for saving truth; and substituting an extravagant admiration of the leading men and favorite preachers of their denomination for the love of Christ, there are some who have gazed, in silence and in secret, upon that face "marred;" that form insulted; those bleeding wounds of that Just and Holy One who "offered himself without spot to God," and have, in humble hope, yielded to him alone their confidence and love.
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> Such individuals are found in all parties, and they recognize each other as being fellow-heirs of the grace of life, and as having a common interest in the great Redeemer. **It is, indeed, this simple faith in Christ, accompanied by its appropriate fruits, which constitutes that "common Christianity**" which is admitted to exist in all parties, independent of party peculiarities; an admission, by the way, which at once assigns to these peculiarities their true character, as mere excrescences ["projection or

[17] Robert Richardson, *The Principles and Objects of the Religious Reformation, Urged by A. Campbell and Others* (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1853), 12.

[18] Ibid, 26.

[19] Ibid

> outgrowth especially when abnormal"] upon Christianity; as having no power to save, and as the very means of perpetuating division. **Happy would it be for the world, if all could be induced to rest content with that "common Christianity," which it is the very object of the present Reformation to present to the religious community as the only means of securing unity and peace** [**Reformation hermeneutics, <u>unity in diversity—RDB</u>**].[20] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

As we seek to really and truly understand ***Reformation hermeneutics***, we should remember that Jesus is "**our righteousness**" (1 Corinthians 1:28-31). Seven hundred years earlier than Paul, Jeremiah foretold the coming of the Messiah in the last days of Israel. But in this coming, he gave us His name: "This is the name by which he will be called: "**The Lord Our righteousness**" (Jeremiah 23:6). The center of gravity has been transferred from the Cross to our inherited traditions about "pattern theology" (so-called five acts of worship performed on Sunday morning in a particular manner—R**estoration hermeneutics**). It is the Cross of Jesus that differentiates Reformation hermeneutics from all other forms of so-called orthodoxy. In the first seventeen years of my ministry in the one-cup and non-Sunday school fellowship, I trusted the orthodoxy of my odd or off-the-wall brand of Christianity. Yes I had zeal for our human opinions, which we thought were biblical.

Unknowingly, I fostered a ***Restoration hermeneutics*** rather than a ***Reformation hermeneutics***. What is the answer for the twenty-first century? **Common Christianity** (the Good Confession—1 Timothy 6:13) should be the object of our present Reformation emphasis. The church today cannot heal its divisions unless there is liberty of opinion. Our motto should be: **<u>in faith</u>** unity, **<u>in opinions</u>** liberty, and **in all things <u>love</u>**. The true ground of unity is Jesus! Our unity is found in the Gospel, not as some suggest "unity in conformity," that is to say, in their sectarian mindset with their elaborate system of misinformed theology of a "pattern" for whatever the Church does in its outreach to the lost and in its Sunday gathering of the saints for edification and spiritual strength. As Christians, we have the right of private judgment (see Romans 14-16 and I Corinthians 8). **If anyone is looking to uphold his or her orthodoxy (accepted view or belief), all one has to do is to look for a proof-text, that is to say, a text out of context that gives credence to one's preconceived belief system**.[21]

When I was thirty-four years old (1968), I questioned what I had been taught by my uncle (E. H. Miller—1909-1989). Our movement (one-cup and non-Sunday school), so we thought, was the one true church. For one to disagree with our understanding of the Bible was tantamount to disagreeing with God Himself. This movement was and still is a ***Restoration Movement***. An ecumenical position (representing the whole of a body of churches) in this unique fellowship of God's people was and is unthinkable. Those who are still apart of this movement (2021) take for granted what they have been taught and never questioned their editor bishops nor their leaders. Yet, this same mindset is common within the various warring parties (about twenty-five or more), within the so-called ***Restoration Movement*** within the Churches of Christ. This philosophy maintains that each distinctive so-called "**restoration**" outlook is that

[20] Ibid, 27-28.

[21] For essays on "Unity in Diversity," go to freedominchrist.net and then go to Recent Post and click on Articles on Unity in Diversity.

each faction maintains that it and it alone represent the exact restoration of the ancient order of things. The Churches of Christ are generally known for two foremost beliefs: (**1**) instrumental music is sinful, and (**2**) we are the only ones going to heaven. The following motto is rejected: "We are Christians only, but not the ONLY Christians."

When George Whitefield[22] (ˈhwit-ˌfēld, 1714-1770) arrived in America on his first evangelistic tour, he was one of the most catholic-spirited ministers of his time. In his ministry, he maintained vital religion and preached conversion. On one occasion, as he was preaching from the balcony of the courthouse in Philadelphia, he, I suspect, shocked the audience when he cried out:

> Father Abraham, whom have you in heaven? Any **Episcopalians**? "No." Any **Presbyterians**? "No." Have you any **Independents or Seceders**? "No." Have you any **Methodist**? "No, no, no!!" **Whom have you there? <u>We don't know those names here</u>**. All who are here are Christians—believers in Christ—men who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony. Oh, is this the case? Then God help us, God help us all, to forget party names, and to become Christians in deed and in truth.[23] (Emphasis min—bold and underlining)

These remarks are cast more in harmony with what I call ***Reformation hermeneutics*** than ***Restoration hermeneutics***. William Thomas Moore (1832-1926) published a book in 1871 that contains sermons by twenty-eight preachers who were focused on the ***Reformation Movement*** rather than on the ***Restoration Movement***. Davis Staats Burnet (1808-1867), one of twenty-eight authors, wrote an excellent sermon that was published in *The Living Pulpit of the Christian Church*. He cited 1 Timothy 6:13 concerning the confession that Jesus made before Pontius—"Are you the Christ, the Son of God?" (Matthew 26:63). Jesus answered: "Yes, it is as you say" (26:64). Timothy was urged to keep this charge concerning the Good Confession. This confession is founded upon the testimony of Jesus Himself as well as God the Father (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). Burnet called attention to this "confession" in response to a multitude of religious denominations that require more than this for fellowship. He called attention to the fact that those within the **Stone/Campbell Movement** have adopted the mindset of the various denominations that insist upon their creeds as the means of fellowship. It is in this regards that he writes: "**But the instrument of salvation, called the Gospel was committed to the apostles to be preached and administered to the people of all nations**."[24]

The Stone/Campbell movement was drifting away from its original roots: "**In essentials**, unity; **in opinions**, liberty; and **above all things love**." Regrettably, more and more "essentials" increased and were made conditions of fellowship. **Burnet sought to go back to the preaching**

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[22] Whitefield was an Anglican cleric and evangelist who was one of the founders of <u>Methodism</u> and the evangelical movement. He received widespread recognition during his ministry; he preached at least 18,000 times to perhaps 10 million listeners in Great Britain and her American colonies. Whitefield could enthrall large audiences through a potent combination of drama, religious rhetoric, and patriotism

[23] Cited in William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930, 1950), 141-142.

[24] See D. S. Burnet, "The Good Confession" in W. T. Moore, *The Living Pulpit of the Christian Church: A Series of Discourses, Doctrinal and Practical* (Cincinnati: R. W. Carroll & Co., Publishers, 1871), 50.

of the Gospel in order to maintain unity among God's people, He penned the following words, which thoughts should resonate with us:

> To a careful reader, nothing will be more apparent than that the whole purpose of the apostolic ministry was to argue and enforce the claims of Jesus upon the faith, reverence, and heartfelt obedience of all classes of persons, as the heavenly-provided Savior of a lost race. They drove this one point to the conviction and submission of all but the incorrigible. **They had nothing to do with doctrines**. They **preached a person**, Jesus, made of a woman, as human as his mother, and having been declared to be the Son of God with power, as divine as his Father…. **The Good Confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is the creed and foundation of the Primitive Church**. [25]

The major focus of this message by Burnet is to draw attention to what will *unite* the body of Christ. His entire sermon calls attention to ***Reformation hermeneutics*** rather than ***Restoration hermeneutics***. One philosophy *unites* whereas the other *divides*. The following commentary by Leroy Garrett (1918-2015) called attention to "Grounds for Division," which comments are in line with Burnet:

> The separation of Churches of Christ is to be accounted for on theological and hermeneutical grounds more than any other factor. **The conservatives, influenced by the restorationist point of view, could not find the society and organ in the New Testament**. The more liberal interpreters, not bound by patternistic hermeneutics, were more progressive in accepting change. It was the mentality of "multiplying the essentials," as Stephen England noted. **Even the silences of Scripture were made essentials**.[26]

Once more, I wish to add a lengthy citation from Garrett in order to clarify more distinctly the major focus upon the **two kinds of hermeneutics**—one favorable, the other unfavorable.

> Near the end of his ministry, in 1862, he [Alexander Campbell] was still pleading for a unity based on what he called "**the seven superlative facts**" in Eph. 4: **one** Body, **one** Spirit, **one** hope, **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God, and Father of all. He made these the essence of the Disciples' plea and the basis of Christian union. **There can be diversity of doctrine and differences of opinion, but Paul's seven facts, when believed and obeyed, unite all of God's church**.
>
> Early in his ministry he had named what he considered "the essential attributes" of his plea.[41] While basically the same as the foregoing, he included other ideas he considered crucial to **reformation**, such as "The restoration of a pure speech, or the calling of Bible things by Bible names" and "The **right of private opinion** in all matters not revealed in contradistinction from the common faith, without the forfeiture of Christian character or Christian privilege."[42]

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[25] Ibid., 50-51. I highly recommend this sermon, pages 47-68

[26] Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (College Press Publishing Company, 2002), 401. For an in-depth study on instrumental music utilized by many Christians in their gatherings, see freedominchrist.net. Once this site is accessed, go to the caption: ARTICLES ON INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.

[41] Alexander Campbell, "Union, Union, Union," *Millennial Harbinger*, 1862, pp. 49f.

[42] Alexander Campbell, "Synopsis of Reformation Principles and Objects," *Millennial Harbinger*, 1837, p. 530f. The footnotes 41 and 42 are found within the citation from Leroy Garrette.

> He also stressed the importance of understanding the **nature of the gospel**, which, he contended, is not a theory, a doctrine, or a system of philosophy. It is not even the theory of faith, repentance, and baptism. **The gospel is rather the proclamation of remission of sins and eternal life through the sacrifice of Christ to all who obey him**.[27] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

In the twenty-first century (2021), we need to call for a **new** ***Restoration Movement*** that had its original foundation initiated by the Campbell's in 1809, which **Movement** was a ***Reformation Movement***, not a ***Restoration Movement*** of the 1880's. The church never ceased to exist. The Church did not need to be restored. What the Church needed was a restoration of how to deal with differences within the Body of Christ (see I Corinthians 8 and Romans 14-16 as to how Paul dealt with inaccurate understanding, which is what Stone and the Campbell's sought to restore—"unity in diversity."). The so-called modern-day ***Restoration Movement*** had its official beginning with Daniel Sommer's Sand Creek Address on August 17, 1889. Eighty-years after Thomas Campbell's ***Declaration and Address*** that called for "unity" among the denominations in spite of differences in how to interpret certain Scriptures, Sommer read his ***Address and Declaration***, which called for "separation" if the various fellowships known as the Disciples of Christ, Christian Church, and Church of Christ did not subscribe to his demands.

He was **NOT** seeking to restore unity among the various denominations nor within the Stone-Campbell Movement, which Alexander himself, later in life, styled his movement as a denomination. His motto was "unity in conformity." Sommer was calling for "division" from those who refused to bend to his brand or type of so-called orthodoxy. He, like the modern-day Churches of Christ, proclaimed the idea of a ***Restoration Movement*** ("**Restoration hermeneutics**") rather than a **Reformation Movement** ("**Reformation Hermeneutics**").

Alexander Campbell did not use the term "restoration" in the same sense as Sommer or the modern-day Churches of Christ. **Sommer set forth what is known today within the Churches of Christ as "pattern theology**." Matthew C. Morrison's biography of Daniel Sommer details some of the odd beliefs that he taught. He believed that God had ordained a so-called worship service with detailed instructions about ordained rituals concerning how to conduct a Sunday morning worship service. He, in addition to his concept of worship, also demanded that the churches should adopt his other philosophies concerning institutions. Morrison pens the following comments about his radical ideas:

> The same is true, Sommer said, of "the old and new digressives," the former in introducing **musical instruments into worship** and **supporting missionary societies**, and the latter in **favoring Bible colleges**. H labeled these brethren "two classes of mongrel religionists, or religious hermaphrodites." **To speak of them as Christians, he said**, "should approach the New Testament," and to call them infidels would "unduly compliment logic. [28]

[27] Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (College Press Publishing Company, 2002), 246.

[28] Matthew C. Morrison, *Like a Lion: Daniel Sommer's Seventy years of Preaching* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Dehoff Publications, 1975), 30.

CONCLUSION

My objective in writing this brief examination of the distinction between a ***Reformation Movement*** and a ***Restoration Movement*** is to assist God's family in working toward a ***Reformation Movement*** that seeks to maintain "unity" for the welfare of lost humanity. Unfortunately, many sincere Christians today have adopted Sommer's concept of a ***Restoration Movement***, **NOT** the same Movement that the Campbell's initiated. Prior to the above statement, Sommer, according to Morrison, advanced the notion of a detailed "pattern" for a worship gathering. We should read and listen carefully to his presuppositions or deductions, which deductions are without merit:

> Sommer espoused this restoration principle, believing that the apostles, "guided into all truth" by a heaven-reigning Christ, **provided exact details**, **blueprints**, and **commands** in the New Testament of a clearly discernible church organization, **doctrine**, and **worship**.[29] (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining).

The SO-CALLED ***Restoration Movement*** has forgotten the slogan initiated by Barton Stone (1772-1844). Every Christian should reflect upon the truth of Stone's motto: "**Let the unity of Christians be our polar star**."[30] Later, in Garrett's book, he cited Karl Barth (1886-1968) in seeking to focus upon the very heart of God's Gospel. The following citation should resonate or reverberate within our minds as we seek to bring about unity among God's people: "When theologian Karl Barth was asked about how to identify a true church, he said that 'a true church is where the power of Christ is present in the lives of the people.' **That is a better answer than the illusion that we are 'an exact copy' of some 'original pattern' that never existed to begin with**"[31] (Emphasis mine—bold).[32]

What is the distinction between the two different concepts? ***Restoration hermeneutics*** emphasizes "**unity in conformity**." On the other hand, ***Reformation hermeneutics*** advances "**unity in diversity**." Again, ***Restoration hermeneutics*** advances the belief that there is a "***pattern*** for a so-called worship service," which is spelled out in the twenty-seven books called the New Testament. "Unity in diversity" for the ***Restoration Movement*** is an anathema or an abomination to God. In other words, "unity in diversity" is to them a false doctrine. In my

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[29] Ibid., 29-30.

[30] See Leroy Garrett, *What Must the Church of Christ Do to Be Saved?* (SCM e-Prints, 2011), 53.

[31] Ibid., 135.

[32] For an examination of "**Pattern Theology**," see freedominchrist.net. Once you have accessed this site, go to the caption "**Articles on the One Cup Issue**" and then click on "**Oddities in Pattern Theology**" by Dallas Burdette. I also recommend my **five essays on worship** under this same site. I also recommend Leroy Garrett's videos on a "Biblical Mandate for Unity" on freedominchrist.net. Once this website is activated, go to Additional Learning and click on Leroy Garrett for his lectures. For a classic example of the "Pattern Theology" within the Churches of Christ, see Goebel Music, Behold the Pattern (Colleyville, TX: Goebel Music Publications, 1991). For a brief overview of this book by Goebel, see Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 1981, Revised edition, 1994), 457-460.

seventy years of preaching and teaching, I have observed that within the Churches of Christ our emphasis has switched from preaching Christ crucified to an alleged OR UNPROVEN doctrine of a supposed worship service pattern. Finally, I wish to capture our current problem within the ***Restoration Movement*** initiated by Daniel Sommer (1850-1940) in 1889. Yet again, the following comments by Leroy Garrett should **touch** our hearts and **open** our eyes as to what has happen to God's family:

> At the heart of our problem, as well as other churches, is that we are caught in the trappings of our own institutionalism — or churchism might be the word. We have expensive edifices to pay for and to maintain, staffs to support, programs to fund. Our Achilles heel is the System. The System resists change, except occasional cosmetic change. Nothing real or substantial. **The System demands conformity, and it is uneasy with thinking people around, especially a thinking preacher or a preacher that says something.** The System must maintain the status quo, and it must preserve itself at all cost. This is why it seeks to keep everyone satisfied by reacting rather than acting. And most significantly, the System is tied to the building. Regular church attendance, along with generous giving, is the essence of "faithfulness."[33] (Emphasis mine—bold)

The following story illustrates our predicament today (2021) within the Body of Christ. Hopefully, this sad but comical story demonstrates our present-day position concerning unity among God's people:

Story:

Two Men on a Bridge

Comedian Emo Philips tells a story about two men on a bridge, one of which is about to commit suicide. He relates this story in order to demonstrate how crazy denominationalism can become. Many of us can identify with this mindset since we may have grown up in a very narrow-minded denomination called the Church of Christ. Listen to this story to see if you can recognize yourself. To set the stage for this story, we should keep in mind that one person was about to jump when another person approached this individual to try to talk him out of this frame of mind. This story begins when it turns to religion:

I said, "Are you a Christian or Jew or a Hindu or what?"
He said, "A Christian."
I said, "Small world! Me, too. Protestant or Catholic or Greek Orthodox?"
He said, "Protestant."
I said, "Me, too! What franchise?"
He said, "Baptist."
I said, "Me, too! Northern Baptist or southern Baptist?"
He said, "Northern Baptist."

[33] Ibid., 188.

I said, Me, too! Northern Conservative Baptist or Northern Liberal Baptist?"
He said, "Northern Conservative Baptist."
I said, "Me, too! Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist or Northern Conservative Reformed Baptist?"
He said, "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist."
I said, "Me, too! Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist, Great Lakes region, or Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist, Eastern Region?"
He said, "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist, Great Lakes Region."
I said, "Me, too! Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1879 or Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912?"
He said, "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912."
I screamed, 'DIE HERETIC!" And I pushed him over.[34]

[34]Cited from Jerry Newcombe, C*oming Again* (Colorado Springs: Colorado: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1999), 45. I (**R**obert **D**allas **B**urdette) highlighted "I said" and "He said" in order to facility ease of reading. This story was transcribed from video (routine by comedian Emo Philips), reproduce in Michael J. Hostetler, *Illustrating the Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, Zondervan, 1989), 78-79. I am indebted to Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004), 43 for citation reference.